

## ROUTES TO ROOTS: *Second-Generation Turks from Germany 'Return' to Turkey*

### Abstract

Based on 26 in-depth interviews with German-born second-generation adults of Turkish parentage who have relocated to the Istanbul region, this paper consists of three parts corresponding to three questions regarding: (i) their memories of growing up in Germany, (ii) the circumstances and motivations surrounding their 'return' and (iii) their experiences of life in Turkey since return. We draw on the conceptual notion of 'third space' to propose that the second-generation returnees occupy a fourth socio-cultural space that is distinct from German society, Turkish society and the Turkish immigrant community in Germany.

### Keywords

Turkish migration • Germany • second generation • return migration • 'fourth space'

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## 1. Introduction

Turkish migration to Germany is the second largest international migration in the contemporary developed world, after Mexican migration to the United States. Estimates of the Turkish-origin population in Germany are far from precise; one suggests 2.7 million (World Bank 2011).<sup>1</sup> The migration dates back more than 50 years to labour-recruitment agreements made in the early 1960s. Initially, Turks were hired as 'guestworkers', the assumption being that they would soon return home. Some did, but most stayed on and were joined by their spouses and young children. Further children were born in Germany. Continued family reunion migration sustained the growth of the Turkish population in Germany beyond the 'recruitment stop' of 1973. A later, smaller wave of Turkish migration to Germany took place in the early 1980s following the military coup that led to the forced or self-imposed exile of opponents of the new regime.

This paper focuses on a migratory movement that is doubly defined: first by its generational cohort, the second generation; and second by its direction, a 'return' to the parental homeland. In the case of most of our research participants, this is not a real statistical return, since the migrants do not move to a place they had lived in before. Yet, because many interviewees articulated a sense of 'going back' to the land of their family roots, we use the term 'return' generally without quotation marks.

We acknowledge that 'return' is used in migration research in many ways; a common, yet problematic distinction is that between 'forced' and 'voluntary' return, often mobilised in a refugee/asylum context. In practice, this distinction is often blurred, or even unhelpful,

but it is difficult to find alternative terms. Another issue, pointed out by Biao, Yeoh & Toyota (2013: 15–16), is the way that in the discourses of governments, NGOs and the media (and often in the narratives of migrants themselves), return is 'naturalised'; in other words, what is more 'natural' than asking or encouraging migrants to go back to where they 'really belong'? Findings from our research exemplify a range of incentives and constraints on return for the Turkish-German second generation, and also demonstrate profound ambiguities regarding their social position post-return. Taking our cue from Homi Bhabha's notion of a 'third space' that is 'intermediate, hybrid and cross-fertilised' (1994: 38, 219), we suggest that our research participants occupy a 'fourth space': a materialisation of their social being reflecting influences from, yet also distinct from, German society, Turkish society and the social world of Turkish immigrants in Germany.

## 2. Research questions

The phenomenon of second-generation return migration has come to be quite widely researched in recent years. Studies have been focused on the English-speaking Caribbean (Phillips & Potter 2009; Potter 2005; Reynolds 2011), India (Jain 2013) and several southern European countries including Portugal (Sardinha 2011), Italy (Wessendorf 2007), Greece (King & Christou 2010) and Cyprus (Teerling 2011). However, our reason for examining the Turkish

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experience is not just to add another case-study. Rather, what is surprising is that almost no research has been published on second-generation return from Europe's largest migrant nationality, despite the fact that anecdotal evidence within the main host countries (Germany, the Netherlands and Belgium) suggests that this type of return is growing.<sup>2</sup>

Three main research questions guide our investigation, each corresponding to a stage in the second generation's relocation in the parental homeland.

1. *To what extent does the second generation's experience of growing up within a Turkish family setting in Germany prepare them for the possibility of returning to Turkey when they are older?*

Are those who return the product of a highly 'Turkish' upbringing within one of the Turkish districts that have developed in most large German cities? What transnational ties are the second generation exposed to whilst growing up in order to foster the idea and the practicality of a possible future return?

2. *What are the circumstances and motivations that lead the second generation to resettle in Turkey?*

To what extent is this an individual or a whole-family decision? Does return migration result from a lack of integration into German society and/or experiences of racism and discrimination? Against this 'push' factor of rejection by German society, what are the 'pull' factors drawing the second generation to Turkey?

3. *What are the second generation's experiences of settling, living and working in the Turkish homeland?*

How do they compare their new 'Turkish' way of life with that experienced before in Germany? How do they view constraints or conflicts arising over gender relations and other power structures in Turkey compared with the more gender-equal and meritocratic German society?

### 3. Methods

Our main research instrument was the semi-structured life-narrative interview. Participants were asked to recount their lives across the three phases – before return, the return itself and after return – described above. In pre-interview briefings, the interviewer (Nilay Kılinc) stressed the principles of informed consent and the interviewee's rights to stop the interview or the recording at any point, and to see and check the transcript. Participants were encouraged to start their accounts by talking about their parents' migration to Germany. This led on naturally to descriptions of their own childhood in Germany and the nature of their family upbringing. Following what was usually a chronological sequence, the narratives then moved to cover material relevant to the second and third questions above, concerning the return decision and post-return life in Turkey.

The field research started with a scoping visit in summer 2012 to test the interview strategy and line up contacts for the main field survey. During this pilot visit, five 'test' interviews were made. During the main interviewing period, later in the year, 21 detailed narratives were collected, lasting between one and three hours. All interviews were recorded, and then simultaneously transcribed and translated from Turkish into English. Interviewees were selected on the basis of snowballing out from the interviewer's personal network, plus some more casual approaches. All 26 interviews were taken in the Istanbul metropolitan region; the significance and limitations of this will become apparent later. Interviewees ranged in age from 23 to 51 years, with a majority of women (18 women versus 8 men), a result of the greater willingness of females to be interviewed. Some

respondents returned as teenagers when their parents brought them back in a whole-family return; others returned independently at more mature ages, mostly in their 20s and 30s. Hence the length of time living in Turkey varied greatly, from one year (the minimum threshold) to more than 30 years.

We adopted a flexible definition of 'second generation'. Whilst most participants had been born in Germany to two first-generation immigrant parents, others had been born in Turkey and taken abroad as young children. In a few cases, one of their parents was second generation, having been born in Germany in the early guestworker years or taken to Germany by their guestworker parents. In the analysis below, we privilege the accounts of selected participants to illustrate key findings. The strategic choice of these individuals is designed to reflect broader groups of returnees and their collective experiences. However, we stress that the rather small size of the sample, its partial-snowball composition and its geographical focus on the Istanbul area do constrain our ability to make robust generalisations.

### 4. Turkish-German childhoods

When spelling out the research questions, we suggested two possible relationships between the propensity of the second generation to return to Turkey and aspects of their early socialisation experience in Germany. The first related to the influence of a strong 'Turkish' family and cultural background, and the second referred to experiences of rejection and racism from German society. In order to evaluate these working hypotheses, at least within the context of our Istanbul study, we need to revisit the staged evolution of Turkish migration to Germany.

Following key authors such as Abadan-Unat (1976), Akgündüz (2008) and Paine (1979), we identify several phases in the development of Turkish emigration to Germany. In the early 1960s, those recruited to work in Germany were mainly young men from Istanbul, relatively skilled and educated compared with the average working population of Turkey at that time. In a second phase, lasting until 1973, the hiring of Turkish guestworkers expanded in scale, their origins shifted to rural Turkey and their educational levels decreased. At the same time, German and European social legislation allowed family members to follow, and family reunion migration accounted for most of the inflow after 1973 when the immigration of workers from outside the European Community was halted. A further wave of migration followed the imposition of a military-style government in Turkey in 1980; most of these exiles and refugees were politically aware and well educated.

Our interviewees' parents were overwhelmingly from the first (early 1960s) and the final phases (1980s), and had migrated from the Istanbul area. Virtually all participants were at pains to point out that their parents were not poverty-stricken, semi-literate rural workers. Although the first generation's motives for emigration were mainly economic – to access more remunerative and regular work – they remained a class apart from the rural-origin guestworkers who came to embody the archetype of Turkish labour migration to Germany. Interviewees repeatedly emphasised this difference, using phrases like "We weren't like the other Turks". They made a similar distinction when describing their lives in Germany, stressing how they grew up in 'German' neighbourhoods and not in the Turkish 'enclaves' of big cities like Berlin and Stuttgart. A parallel experience was noted in the school setting, where the expression "I was the only Turk in the class" was used by many participants to reinforce their distinctiveness from

other Turkish children. Here is an extract from the interview with Eda, aged 23. Born in Munich, she moved to Istanbul aged 20 to develop her career as a make-up artist working in the media industry.

We lived in a neighbourhood where there were mostly Germans... There are of course many Turks living in Munich... there is a district like a Turkish town, with Turkish coffee-houses where guys sit and play cards, there are carpet stores and kebab places... In secondary school there was only one Turk apart from me, and in the make-up course there was no other Turkish student... So I was mainly with Germans whilst growing up... I had many German friends.

Hence the first working hypothesis mentioned above – that the second generation returns because of its failure to integrate into German society and a consequent feeling of rejection and discrimination – is turned on its head, at least for this interview sample from Istanbul. Instead, those who return seem to be (at least according to their testimonials) the *most* integrated of the younger-generation Turks. The distinction that they draw is not with the ‘German others’, but with the ‘other’ Turks who are criticised for *their* failure to integrate and for their spatial and social ghettoisation.

With regard to the second working hypothesis – that the strong preservation of ‘Turkish’ cultural traditions (language, religion, festivities, etc.) predisposes the second generation to return – the evidence is more mixed. Most returnees described a more ‘liberal’ upbringing than the stereotypical patriarchal guestworker family with its adherence to the values and customs of rural Turkey. Nevertheless, most participants *had* grown up within a distinctively ‘Turkish’ family environment, with many cultural elements – food, language, and a generally patriotic sense of Turkish history and identity – well represented. Experience of religion was more varied. Whilst some families held closely to Muslim religious practices, others were more secular or syncretic with regard to religion. Several interviewees referred with enthusiasm to Christmas celebrations, and being part of Christmas plays at school, as well as keeping to the Muslim festivities of *Bayram* at home and with their Turkish friends, an interesting exemplification of the “hybrid hyphenations” that represent “*something else besides, in-between*” of the “third space” (Bhabha 1994: 219, emphasis in original).

An important part of keeping Turkish culture alive amongst the second generation was the practice of making ‘home-country’ visits with their parents, usually every summer for 4–6 weeks. The return visit was the most tangible manifestation that Turkish families in Germany inhabited a “transnational social space” (Faist 2000) that stretched between the two countries, or more specifically between their place of origin in Turkey and their town of residence in Germany. According to participants’ narratives, these holiday visits were a memorable part of their childhood and adolescence, fulfilling an important function of familiarising them with the homeland and thus preparing the ground for a possible subsequent move there (cf. Conway, Potter & St Bernard 2009; Duval 2004; King, Christou & Teerling 2011). The positive memories of these visits were warm weather, swimming and sunbathing at the seaside, good food and hospitable relatives, and the general atmosphere of fun, friendliness and relaxation. For some of the older participants, whose memories of visits went back to the 1970s and 1980s, there were some negative impressions: of Turkey as a backward country with conservative people. Others remember their treatment by the locals as ‘outsiders’ or as *Almanci*, ‘Germans’. The following quote from Fatih (male, 41) recounts some of these reactions, and ends on a humorous note.

I quite enjoyed those holidays because the weather was always great. There was no school, only swimming, sunbathing, playing with friends, eating ice-cream. This was Turkey for me... I also enjoyed the road trip, which took two days. First we would come to Istanbul and to my grandparents’ place, and then we would head off to the seaside. The local kids were envious of my toys. We had really cool toys from Germany, and the Turkish kids had really crap toys. They called us *Almanci*... My Turkish was OK; it wasn’t advanced but it was enough to communicate. I remember that sometimes I would hear some new Turkish words from the local kids and usually they would be swear words. So I would create an awkward silence at the dinner table by asking what these words meant [laughs].

## 5. Five routes to return

We now move to the core of our paper: why and how does the second generation relocate to Turkey? This question is especially pertinent given that it seems counter-intuitive to move to a country that, despite recent economic growth, remains far less wealthy than Germany, and where the participants have had no experience of living before, except holidays. We distil five main ‘narrative confluences’ in the interview data. These themes are not mutually exclusive; indeed, many interviewees articulated two or more reasons for their return. We take each theme in turn, illustrated with quotes from one typical returnee from that particular group.

### 5.1. The family-return route

In her study of second-generation return from Britain to Jamaica, Reynolds (2008) discusses what she calls the “family narrative of return”, a situation in which the second generation grows up surrounded by constant talk of “going back home”. Often this imagined return is constantly postponed until it never happens, the well-known “myth of return” (Anwar 1979). The family narrative of return is also analysed by King, Christou & Ahrens (2011) in their study of Greek-Germans: they note that it is often the second generation that ‘actualises’ return, leaving their parents behind in Germany where they may have other children (and grandchildren) and where they benefit from better social services and healthcare.

The Turkish-German case, however, is characterised much more by whole-family return. This ‘route to return’ was the most common mechanism amongst our sample, accounting for half of the participants’ relocation to Turkey. Returning through this mechanism generally brought the second generation to Turkey whilst they were teenagers, either still at school or at the end of their school years. Usually they were not consulted; they were simply presented with a *fait accompli*. Most were not happy with the decision, wanting to remain in Germany with their friends and classmates.

Why did family return take place? Various circumstances were described. One commonly cited reason was that this was simply a realisation of the original intention to return. Several interviewees mentioned that family return was incentivised by the “return and reintegration support” of 10,000–15,000 DM offered by the 1983 “Law for the Promotion of Readiness to Return”. As Fatoş (aged 43) recounted, “We returned in 1984; many families returned then because the German government offered money to families [to return].” Fatoş was just 15 when the return took place. She described how nervous she was at entering a new and unfamiliar school

system, but she was fortunate to be placed in a special school for children returning from Germany.

Other family returns were caused by events such as the serious illness of elderly relatives in Turkey. Another circumstance was the desire on the part of the first generation to find a Turkish spouse from Turkey for their offspring. This latter motivation played a role in the case of Fatoş' family. Fatoş is the only child of Turkish parents who moved to Frankfurt in the 1960s; she was born in 1969. Her father was a skilled worker in a printing house and her mother worked in a clothing factory. In Frankfurt, their neighbours were mainly Germans whilst in primary school "I was the only Turkish child." Other relatives had also moved to Frankfurt – one set of grandparents, and some aunts and uncles – and Fatoş described an active social life with these family members, including picnics, visits to parks and museums, going to the swimming pool and so on. Summer holidays were spent in Turkey. "Every summer we would drive to Turkey, it took around three days... We visited relatives in Istanbul... and then went to the summer resorts... I really enjoyed these summer times in Turkey because all the kids would be out in the streets playing." But the permanent return was far less enjoyable:

Well, I didn't want to return. I was very upset at my parents' decision... it wasn't my decision, I was only 15, I wasn't able to have any say. They thought that if they didn't return at that point, they wouldn't return at all... I think that they wanted me to marry someone from our culture, they must have been worried that I might find a German husband or something. So before it was 'too late' they prepared the bags and bought one-way tickets to Istanbul. For the first two years I was very unhappy... I felt like a complete stranger to Turkey... I was missing my friends in Germany, our house there, my school... basically I was missing everything. I was dreaming about going back to Germany and living with my aunt or grandmother... My parents were strongly against this idea and made it clear to me... I had to forget about Germany.

## 5.2. The marriage route

Another route to return was via marriage. Nurten (38) is a good example of this return mechanism. Nurten is married to a distant cousin and has two young daughters. She returned to Istanbul in 2000 to get married; her parents continue to live in Germany and nowadays have no intention to return since they have two sons living in Germany, one of whom is married to a German. Nurten's family migration history exemplifies some of the generational complexities of Turkish migration. Nurten's father had originally been taken to Germany at the age of 17 by his father to join other relatives there. He then returned to Turkey to do his military service, after which he got married. Nurten pointed out: "It was an arranged marriage, my father's father and my mother's father were best friends." Subsequently, Nurten's father re-emigrated to Germany, leaving behind her mother and her new-born elder brother. After two years, Nurten's mother followed on, and Nurten was born in Germany soon after. A third child, Nurten's younger brother, was born later in Germany. The family lived in a small town near Frankfurt. Her father worked as a lathe operator in a large engineering firm and her mother worked in the electronics department of the same company. Later, because of his good knowledge of German, her father was employed as a translator for the company, helping to recruit and liaise with new Turkish workers.

Turning to the issue of her return, Nurten explained, with her eyes lowered and in a shy voice, that her husband is actually a relative who was living in Turkey. After taking a diploma in pharmacy in Germany, she worked as a lab technician in a dispensing chemist until her return to Turkey at the age of 27 to get married. She said: "I was happy there, I liked my job a lot, but I wanted to marry him, so I returned for that reason." Asked how it was upon return and whether she faced any difficulties, Nurten gave a long sigh and continued:

I don't know where to begin... In the beginning it was very difficult. I didn't really have a problem with the language, but... sitting at home, not working... because my husband doesn't want me to work... I was used to a working life [in Germany] and in Turkey I am not allowed to work. This made me fall into a black hole.

Later in her narrative, Nurten described how she has just about managed to adapt to this restriction and to expectations of her husband's family, notably her mother-in-law's habit of calling by without any warning. She stresses the positive aspects of living in Istanbul, and contrasts life in this vibrant city with the 'boring' lives led by most Germans, especially in small towns like the one she grew up in.

It was difficult [living in Turkey] in the beginning, but ... actually, if you have enough money, the quality of life is better in Istanbul... there's not much to do in Germany. Look at Istanbul: it's so alive! In Germany you have a routine life... you wake up, go to work, you come home, you eat, spend an hour or so doing other things, and you go to bed. It's boring. In a small town, there are no cafés or shops open after 6 pm... Here, you can do many things... If you are bored you just go to the Bosphorus, take a walk by the sea, have a cup of tea in a tea-house with friends. You see many people around you, the place is alive, colourful, it puts you in a good mood... I like to see the good side of Turkey.

## 5.3. The educational route

Another route back to Turkey is via education, seen often as a means of reconnecting with an individual's Turkish roots and also as a route to academic and personal self-realisation. Our interview data revealed three distinct sub-routes in this pathway. First, there was the case of Özlem (now 33 years old) who had persuaded her parents to let her take her final school years in a boarding-school in Istanbul where one of her neighbourhood friends from Germany was already studying. The rationales for such a move relate to preparation for entry into the competitive Turkish university system, or in anticipation of the family's imminent relocation to Turkey.

A second sub-route is to enter Turkish university direct from German secondary school. Such students take a special exam, designed to test both their general aptitude and their command of the Turkish language.

The third pathway is the Erasmus exchange scheme, which functions as a bridge to Turkey for young second-generation Turks to 'test the water' and decide whether they want to return to Turkey for a longer-term stay. Akasya (24) came for a semester in 2009 and later, after completing her degree back in Germany, returned to university in Istanbul to do a two-year master's degree, which she was half-way through at the time of her interview. The following is some text from her interview, where she describes her motives and plans for the future:



I came here to study. First I was an Erasmus student, I wanted to study Turkish history and politics. I wanted to continue with a master's degree because I always dreamed of experiencing life in Turkey... It was in my heart, I knew I had to come here... I got accepted, and so I am living here since 2011... I chose to do my master's in cultural studies, since I wish to concentrate on ethnic and cultural topics in Turkey... I like my studies here, and I actually want eventually to work here ... It would also be nice if I had my own place [to live]. But my family preferred that I stayed with my uncle and his family; they feel more comfortable that way. But for next year I am really planning to rent a place for myself with some flatmates... What I really want is to experience working life in Istanbul. I see Istanbul as a place of many opportunities... I know unemployment is a big problem... but somehow I see there are interesting chances. There is a big market in cultural issues... and in recent years dealing with immigrant issues...

Akasya's project of self-realisation is still a work-in-progress. She has taken the first two steps: tested the water through the Erasmus scheme and then committed two more years to master-level study. And she has a clear idea of her self-realisation pathway: a place of her own and a fulfilling job in her ethnic studies specialism. These are demanding ambitions, for she has to detach herself from her family's supervisory network and then find a job that satisfies her interest and pays her enough to be self-supporting.

#### 5.4. The lifestyle route

Several aspects of the life in Turkey that are perceived or experienced as attractive have been referred to already: good memories from childhood (quotes from Fatih and Fatoş above), the lively and sociable outdoor way of life in Istanbul with its rich cultural atmosphere (Nurten, Akasya), whilst many other participants emphasised the strength and solidarity of Turkish family life and the warmth of hospitality, not only within the family but also from strangers.

Typical of the notion of "return to roots" (Wessendorf 2007) and the attraction of Turkey as a lifestyle destination is the case of Öykü. Aged 34, she moved to Istanbul eight years earlier: it was an independent decision, driven by a long-held dream of returning to live in what she regarded as her true homeland. Her case also illustrates the diversity of the Turkish migratory flow to Germany. Öykü's parents were not 1960s guestworkers (as were the parents of Fatoş and Nilgün) nor were they 1980s political exiles (like the parents of Akasya); they were graduate professionals, her father in electrical engineering and her mother in fine arts. Her father migrated to Düsseldorf in 1972, initially on a two-year contract; her mother followed in 1975, when the contract was extended and her father had enrolled part-time for a master's degree in Germany. Thus, in Öykü's words, "those two years became thirty years". Öykü and her brother were born in Germany: her mother juggled childcare with a job teaching life-skills to newly arrived women from rural Turkey. Öykü's grandmother came to Germany to help with childcare. Öykü described her upbringing as very open-minded: her parents gave her the same freedom as her German peers, yet there was still a concern to preserve the Turkish language and culture, thanks to the presence of the grandmother in the home. As Öykü said, "I spoke Turkish with my grandmother, Turkish and German with my mother, and only German with my father and brother". She described her 'route' to Turkey:

Since my school days, I had always wanted to live in Turkey. I always felt a strong bond to Turkey... One of my friends, she was our neighbour in Germany, returned to Turkey and I was dying to see her in Istanbul... I went to see her over the Christmas break. Those two weeks made me sure that I wanted to live in Turkey. I don't know what attracted me so much... it was just the general way of life, I just had this strong feeling that living in Turkey would be right for me.

However, her parents insisted that she complete her university studies in Germany first, because of the higher quality of the German education system. Also, "since we didn't have many relatives in Turkey, they didn't want me to live alone in Turkey at such a young age". As a result, Öykü finished her degree in dental technology in Germany and then moved to Turkey in her 20s, finding a job, with some difficulty, as a dental technician.

#### 5.5. The escape route

Previous research on Greek-German second-generation returnees revealed that the 'escape' narrative was a mainly female story, reacting against patriarchy within the family and against the tradition-bound social mores of the village-origin Greek communities in German cities (King, Christou & Ahrens 2011). For our study sample, the situation is different. Since most of the interviewees' parents originated from Istanbul, not rural Turkey, and settled away from the Turkish enclaves in the big cities, the oppressively traditional 'ethnic' background was not seen as an issue. Rather, as we have seen, most participants were keen to point out how 'open-minded' their parents were, especially compared with those 'other' Turks who lived in the 'ghettos'. Hence the 'escape' narrative was proffered by only a handful of participants.

A typical example is the case of Nilgün, now aged 50, who moved to Turkey in 2000 after a divorce. The return was timed to coincide with the start of primary schooling for her daughter. University-educated (though she did not complete her degree), Nilgün worked in an architect's office in Germany and then married a fellow Turkish-German, but the marriage did not last. She had problems with her ex-husband and thought it would be best for her and her daughter if they made fresh start in Istanbul:

Unfortunately Turkish guys can't deal with divorces, they put the children in between and make things harder... I couldn't let this happen to my child. So I felt we needed a fresh start. I thought that my kid would be happier in Istanbul away from the problems of separated parents...

Once she had returned to Istanbul with her daughter, Nilgün found a teaching job at a German-language secondary school, thereby benefiting from her bi-lingual, bi-cultural background. Working in a German-related institutional setting, she was partially protected from the many challenges of establishing a working life in Turkey that other participants were keen to tell us about.

### 6. Returnees' perspectives on life in Istanbul: a 'fourth space'?

In this final section of our empirical analysis, we turn to the third stage of the return process: post-return. This was often the part of their

interview where participants talked at the greatest length and with the greatest animation. We pay particular attention to their employment and educational experiences, and to their own self-positioning within the complex socio-cultural matrices that make up their migratory trajectories. We also need to acknowledge that the returnees' experiences of life in Turkey stretch over varying periods of time. Not only does this set the scene for contrasting reactions according to the timing of return (early returnees remark how 'backward' Turkey was in the late 1970s and early 1980s, whereas recent returnees are struck by the country's consumerism), it also enables the longer-returned participants to elaborate on their own changing reactions and adaptation processes.

Scrutinising the narrative evidence, we observe two intriguingly opposite trends. For those who came to Turkey via the constrained return route of family relocation, often as teenagers, the trauma of changing schools, languages, friends and ways of life gradually gives way as the interview progresses to acknowledgement that, actually, things did not work out so badly after all. Nevertheless, most of these longer-settled returnees still feel some elements of their 'German' upbringing, and are often nostalgic about this. Fatoş, whose example we took as emblematic of the teenager's forced return, told us she still watched German satellite TV and read German novels, even after nearly 30 years in Turkey. She said that she is always meticulously punctual for meetings and that, as a pedestrian, she always waits for the green light to cross the street. She also related how her teenage son remonstrates with her for being too disciplined with him, saying to her: "You are too German!"

By contrast, participants who relocated to Turkey of their own volition, to go to university or for lifestyle reasons, often articulate a counter-narrative of disappointment. For those who were working or looking for work, the most consistent narrative theme was the contrast in work cultures. Özlem had worked for both German and Turkish companies:

In Turkey, it's hard to work in a professional environment. The companies either have a corrupt system or no system at all... Turkish workers don't work effectively... they mostly come to work late and take long lunch-breaks... In Germany meetings are important to plan and organise... also for evaluation and planning project targets. In Turkey there is no culture of meetings; things are done randomly and people don't brief each other... In Turkey things work like 'you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours'.

Another common topic was education. Contrasts were drawn between the German education system and its emphasis on pupil-centred learning, problem-solving and critical thinking, and the Turkish system, seen as militaristic and based on memorisation. Exceptions were the private high schools and boarding-schools set up with 'German' or 'international' teaching methods and curricula, such as those attended by Fatoş and Özlem. Here we quote from Sevim (47) who had a three-way perspective on this comparison: her own early schooling in a small German town, her final years of schooling when she was brought to Turkey by her returning parents and her teenage son's experience of education in Istanbul.

My son can't have the opportunities I had in Germany. Education was free in Germany – we had so many services for free. ... In the 1970s in Germany we had everything... in 2012 I am not able to give my son one quarter of the things I had in my own childhood. Turkey is following Europe 50 years behind. The state school I went to in our shitty little town in Germany was more modern and

better equipped than the private schools of today in Istanbul. We had a big pool, library, sports area, extensive grounds, English courses, social events... we had separate desks. In Istanbul when I was in school here, I had to share my desk with two other students. The classrooms were packed, around 50 students in one class. And I hated wearing those uniforms.

The final aspect of the returnees' post-return lives that we consider is their socio-cultural positioning with respect to the various ethno-national spheres that they are either part of or relate to, even if to distance themselves from those seen as 'others'. We decided to eschew any direct engagement with theories of identity, for the same reason that the term is problematised by Anthias, namely, the false assumption "that a subject has a ready-made story to tell about who they are" (2002: 494). Rather, we follow Anthias (2008) in favouring – especially in a transnational context – the notion of positionality, which addresses issues of belonging that are not fixed but time-, place- and context-related, and involve shifts and contradictions. We also draw inspiration from Teerling's (2011) argument that British-born Cypriots who have moved to Cyprus occupy a "third-cultural space of belonging" that is distinct from both the British society they have left behind and Cypriot society.

We find our research participants positioning themselves in relation to three main socio-ethnic groups: native Germans, the Turkish immigrant community in Germany and the Turkish homeland society. Curiously, the group they were most obviously a part of (Turkish immigrants in Germany) is also the one that participants wanted to distance themselves from, through constant references to their parents' Istanbul origins and 'non-traditional' background. This quote from Erdem (45) is typical:

The people who went to Germany in the first phase [referring to his parents], right after the guestworker agreement was signed, came from big cities like Istanbul, and they didn't have any problems integrating in Germany... The problem was the people who came later... these people were from villages and rural areas, they had big families... and with time their relatives migrated to Germany as well. They created their own communities where they strongly preserved their traditions. They didn't integrate, they created ghettos, whole apartment blocks where only Turks lived... Their children became confused... they felt in-between...

Whilst the vast majority of participants stressed their harmonious relations with their German neighbours and peers at school and work, the fact remained that few could be regarded as completely assimilated because of the maintenance of Turkish customs in the sphere of home. The open-mindedness of most of the parents was balanced with a keen loyalty to Turkey and Turkishness within the family. Hence, despite the often strong residual identification with, and fond nostalgia for, many 'German' ways of behaviour, they could never position themselves wholly within the German ethno-cultural sphere, not least because they had chosen to return to Turkey!

So we turn to their self-positioning within the homeland society, and specifically Istanbul. This is less easy to determine because of the changes that have occurred over time, especially for long-resident returnees, and their variable and gendered encounters with the local population in the spheres of work, school, neighbourhood and family. The lifestyles of those who live in lively, cosmopolitan central neighbourhoods are different from those who reside in exclusive gated communities on the European side of the city, or in more socially conservative outlying districts on the Asian side. It is difficult, therefore,

to select representative quotes to illustrate the multiple positions that participants described with respect to Turkish/Istanbul society. Some of the returning teenagers had been welcomed and integrated within their new school settings; others marginalised and made fun of. Some participants reported good experiences of finding work; others (the majority) encountered difficulties, including feeling exploited. We consider two experiences of contrasting urban environments. For those who lived centrally and in 'good' neighbourhoods, the sense of feeling both 'alive' and 'at home' was palpable. Recently-graduated Didem discussed the special quality of life in Istanbul:

Whenever I go there [to Germany], I really miss Turkey! It's so alive here... to go out, just randomly, just for a walk by the sea, to hear the simit-man [bagel-seller] shouting his wares... it's so alive and kicking... You really miss these things when you are away. Because Germany is... so silent, so boring... everything by the rules and everything to be done at a certain time.

On the other hand, Sevim had settled with her Turkish husband in Ümraniye, a peripheral district populated by traditional-minded families. She wanted to continue her sporty life but felt constrained by the surrounding environment.

I want to go swimming... but here the men's and the women's pools are separate, and the women wear costumes like astronauts! I want to live with modern people... In Istanbul there are certain places where you can dress as you want, but here you can't... Üsküdar, Ümraniye, these are conservative districts... I was exercising in the playground and my husband came to me and said 'People are looking at you from the windows'. I looked up and saw guys staring at me... like wolves. I want to be able to wear my shorts, I want to be able to go for a run without people looking at me... I don't know when such things will change in Turkey.

Hence, not fully part of Turkish or Istanbul society that still sees them as *Almançı*, not fully part of German society that they have anyway left behind and detached from the majority rural-origin Turkish immigrant society in Germany, the second-generation returnees whom we interviewed occupy, we suggest, a kind of 'fourth socio-cultural space'. This fourth space is partly of their own making, reflecting both their parental class origins and their specific migratory trajectories back to their parents' homeland, and partly 'imposed' on them by the exclusionary mechanisms embedded in both German and Turkish society. Despite their self-evident 'Turkish' orientation embodied by their return to Turkey, nearly all the participants still keenly felt the enduring effects of their 'German' upbringing and socialisation, such that only others with a similar biographical history could understand them.

## 7. Conclusion

We began this paper with three research questions that we now revisit. *Question 1* was about the ways in which the second generation's 'Turkish' ethnic and transnational experience was instrumental in paving the way for their return to Turkey. Our research evidence suggested two answers to this question. The first confirms the importance of the preservation of key elements of Turkish culture, including language, food, family links and regular holiday visits to Turkey. The second answer works in the opposite direction: our

participants did not form part of the inward-looking 'traditional' Turkish immigrant communities in German cities, but were detached from these, both in class terms (originating from Istanbul and not from rural Turkey) and in terms of their socio-spatial upbringing: living in predominantly 'German' neighbourhoods, going to 'German' schools and so on. Thus, our suggestion (which also lay behind the second research question) that returnees to Turkey were the 'most' Turkish and the 'least integrated' into German society is unsupported, at least for Istanbul.

*Research question 2* was about the mechanisms and motivations of return. We uncovered five 'routes to return', a primary distinction being between those who were taken back as teenagers as part of family return and those who returned at a later life-stage and more independently. Amongst the latter category, we separated those returning to embark on university study, those who returned to get married to a 'Turk from Turkey', those who were drawn by the Turkish lifestyle and those for whom the return represented an 'escape', for example from a failed marriage in Germany. We also noted how some of these routes, such as those involving marriage and 'escape', were gendered, affecting mainly female participants.

*Research question 3* asked about post-return experiences. These, too, were shown to be highly varied dependent, *inter alia*, on the degree of agency exercised by the returning individual, the timing of the move and the age of the participant at the time of return. Gender and family status were also shown to be important, as was the district of Istanbul where they lived. Those who returned as teenagers retained a sense of bitterness about their constrained return, although in most cases this had been overcome by a long adaptation process and further life events (employment, marriage, children, etc.) that, eventually, consolidated their settlement in Turkey. Nevertheless, they, along with most other returnees, remained critical of many aspects of life in Turkey: the 'backward' education system, the 'less professional' work ethic and the close monitoring of certain forms of behaviour seen as 'normal' in Germany but 'unacceptable' in Turkey. The multiple distances and barriers that the second-generation returnees perceived regarding the three main social groups that they were part of or interacted with – German society, Turkish society and Turkish immigrants in Germany – led them to occupy a *fourth socio-cultural space* that only themselves, and others like them, feel fully comfortable within.

One final important methodological point needs to be re-emphasised. By interviewing only in the Istanbul metropolitan region, we captured only a subset of the wider phenomenon of second-generation return migration to Turkey. A second phase of fieldwork and interviewing currently underway focuses on two other Turkish regional realities: rural and tourist areas. Later papers will present these results in a comparative context with those from the Istanbul setting.

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## Notes

- Germany's abandonment of the ethnically-determined *ius sanguinis* rule for citizenship in 1999 has meant that citizenship-based records for Germany's 'foreign' population underestimate the true size of ethnically defined populations due to the considerable numbers of long-term resident Turks and post-migration generations who have gained naturalisation (up to 100,000 per year during the early years of naturalisation).
- Anecdotal evidence comes from conversations with academic colleagues in various countries who are researching other aspects of Turkish migration. Whilst there are statistical data on the return of Turkish citizens from Germany to Turkey (peaking at 200,000 in 1984), there are no estimates of second-generation return. The only relevant empirical study that we could find (Rittersberger-Tılıç, Çelik & Özen 2013) interviewed 22 Turkish-German returnees in Ankara and Antalya, of whom only seven were second generation.